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## REVIEWS

AXEL OLRIK, *THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK*. Translated from the Danish and Revised in Collaboration with the Author by Lee M. Hollander. Scandinavian Monographs VI published by the American-Scandinavian Foundation. xviii+530 p. New York 1919.

\* The following review has been translated in somewhat abbreviated form from the original Danish.—EDITOR.

When the Danish myths and heroic legends were first studied it was but natural that they were viewed through the veil of Icelandic tradition which enveloped the antiquity of all the Northlands. As examples may be mentioned the mythologic studies of *N. F. S. Grundtvig* and of *N. M. Petersen*. This was unavoidable, seeing that Iceland overshadowed all other witnesses with its Eddas and Sagas. Also, the main authority for Denmark's past, Saxo Grammaticus, seemed to confirm the conception that the Danish myths and heroic legends belonged to the Icelandic type.

Very soon, however, efforts were made to view matters from a more national point of view. *Grundtvig* laid the foundations for the scientific study of *Beowulf* and thereby reclaimed a good part of the genuine old Danish legends. *N. M. Petersen* wrote his *Manual of Old Norse Geography*, I, which—even though here, too, the Icelandic material played the leading part—was well suited for initiating a scientific study of native antiquity because it afforded technical helps for an understanding of the tradition. Unfortunately the following volumes of Petersen's work remained unpublished. In general it may be said that his rational mode of attack never won many followers.

Later, the native point of view was upheld by different investigators. Thus by *Svend Grundtvig*, who in his monumental collection 'Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser' produced a work unrivalled except possibly by his American contemporary Child's 'English and Scottish Ballads.' *Feilberg* and *Evald Tang Kristensen* achieved similar magnificent collections of the popular Danish traditions. And *Henry Petersen* in his book *Om Nordboernes Gudsdyrkelse og Gudestro* initiated a determined opposition against the then current conception of Danish mythology as seen through Icelandic glasses.

However, it was *Axel Olrik* who with a broader grasp than any of his predecessors led this conception to victory. Like the older Grundtvig he began by closely studying the mythology of the North. To him, too, *Beowulf* furnishes the basis for an understanding of Danish heroic poetry. As pupil and heir of the younger Grundtvig he continues the edition of the Ballads. He follows *N. M. Petersen's* soberly scientific method of examining the ethnic contents of tradition; and the collections of popular traditions begun by *Feilberg* and *E. T. Kristensen* are scientifically organized by him. Still further, he expressly champions *Henry Petersen's* opposition against the Icelandic conception of

Danish antiquity—more specially so in his book on the Sources of Saxo. In general Olrik is not so unlike the famous German scholar *Müllenhoff* in his many-sidedness, his ethnic interests, his painstaking scrutiny of the foundations of tradition, his acute and sensitive understanding of the soul of legendary poetry. But he also shared the shortcomings of his great contemporary. For instance, just as the *Deutsche Altertumskunde* suffers occasionally from a rhapsodic vagueness and lack of perspicacity in the presentation of the material, Olrik's work also has a tendency to lyrical utterance; though, to be sure, he has in other places, as in his *Laws of the Epic* furnished excellent examples of that exact, methodic formulation which is one of the strong points of Scandinavian scholarship. Altogether, he was a pioneer whose untimely death has torn a great gap in the ranks of Danish scholars.

Olrik's first laurels and his acknowledged rank in science were won by his doctoral dissertation on *Saxo's Sources* (1892-94). Until that time Saxo was considered the last stand for those who held that the *Eddas* and the Scaldic poetry of Iceland were of common Nordic origin and thus also belonged to Denmark. Certain it was that Saxo mentioned Icelanders among his authorities. But who would undertake to separate the Icelandic elements of Saxo's work out from the rest, and on the basis of this separation assert that the Old Danish tradition was of a special type, differing distinctly from Icelandic tradition? It seemed an impossible task. But Olrik faced it and solved the problem. By means of subtle literary and historic analysis, by the evidence of the style, the forms of names, and general characteristics he was able to demonstrate that large portions of Saxo's History, together with the poems interwoven with them, went back to Icelandic or Norwegian tradition. Thus a clear view was at last afforded from the remainder of what really constituted Old Danish tradition, and the way opened for a study of the development of the native material.

The ripe fruit of these basic studies was to be the standard work entitled *Danmark's Helledigtning* whose first volume appeared in 1903 and which now is available in a new edition as "The Heroic Legends of Denmark," translated by Lee M. Hollander. Volume II (1911) treats of 'Starkath and the Younger Scyldings'; volume III, which was to deal with the Bravalla Battle and Harold Wartooth, was about completed at the author's death.

As a basis for our reflections an abbreviated list of contents of the English edition will be given:

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- II-III. The *Biarkamal*.....p. 66
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  - b. 1. Othin in the *Biarkamal*. 2. The Housecarls' Death and Later Fame. 3. Later History of the *Biarkamal*. 4. The Home of the *Biarkamal*. 5. The Icelandic Text. 6. Name, Structure, and Style of the *Biarkamal*.

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Conclusion. The Home of the Hrolf Cycle. 2. A Retrospect.....	p. 508
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The perusal of this list of contents will give one a vivid impression of the interaction between the *deductive* and *inductive* methods of procedure. Investigation may follow one of two ways. The one is to start out with the available literary monuments and find out what they have to say about the times and the conditions in question; the other is to start out from the times and the conditions and with them as a basis investigate the literary traditions which have come down to us. Each of these methods must be tried if the general result is to be satisfactory, and it lies in the nature of things that the tracks frequently cross so that one is tempted to follow one leading in another direction.

For Olrik there existed this special difficulty that he was forced to build from the very bottom up, there being practically no preliminary work to base on; for what was supposed to be 'known' about Danish Heroic Poetry was in reality sheer dilettantism. It was therefore necessary to proceed both deductively and inductively, to the detriment, now and then, of entire perspicacity in outline.

It is not too much to say that "The Heroic Legends of Denmark" has matter enough for a whole encyclopedia. Let me try to illustrate this.

1. *Onomatology*: The Naming-Custom of the Migration Period. (I, 3).
2. *Archaeology and Antiquarian Topography*: The Royal Residence at Leire (VI).
3. *Mythology*. Scyld (VIII), Skuld (II, 5 & V, 2). The Legends of Ingvi (VIII, 6). (Add to this the chapter in vol. II about king Dan's grave and about the archaeological background of the description of his burial together with his horse.) The Peace of King Frothi (IX) Othin in the *Biarkamal* (III, 1).
4. *Ethnology, Earliest History*. The Danes about the year 500 (I, 2). The older Line of the Scyldings (X). Danish kings in Anglo-Saxon Poems (I, 1). The Scylding Feud (I, 4).

Now every one of these chapters or, rather, articles is above praise and, indeed, necessary for an understanding of the underlying conditions of Danish heroic poetry; but as many others might have been added with the same justification.

Nevertheless it must be said that a whole introductory chapter is decidedly lacking, viz., an orientation about the *practitioners*, and about the *forms*, of the *poetic art in Denmark of the oldest times*. It is true that our information on these points is excessively meager. All the more necessary, then, to gather up all the fragments left us. The following comprises the most important evidence: 1) The vocational name Þulr on the runestone of Sällöv, Ags. *þyle* 'poet'; 2) Hiarno as the author of the memorial poem for Frothi the Peaceful, Saxo p. 256; Hiarni skald ("Jærnskjold") in the legend about the grave of the prince of singers Hiarrandi, near the Hiarne Stone in the Hjarrandasysla, cf. Pontoppidan's "Dansk Atlas"; 3) fairly large Danish poems, such as the *Biarkamal* and the Starkath song in Saxo, a poem composed by Danish warriors in England (*Knyllin gasaga*); 4) short verse lines on runestones. Negatively 1) the poems on Danish subjects handed down by Saxo are mostly composed by Icelanders or Norwegians; 2) the only real skaldic poem on a runestone (Karlevi) is composed by one of them; 3) the Danish court poets concerning whom we have reliable information are always Icelanders. It is not my purpose here to draw any conclusions from this material, but only to indicate the necessity of such an orientation in a work about Danish heroic poetry.

Let us examine the chapters above referred to, for together they furnish a general background and have but slight connection with the matter of the *Biarkamal* which is the main subject matter of the volume.

The *Naming Custom* is a most important criterion for the study of literary and political history. It is curious that until Steenstrup called attention to the problem in 1896 no one had seriously envisaged it. Earlier historians were completely at a loss to know whether, e.g., Frothi, Ingiald, and Agnar Ingialdsson belonged to the Scyldings. It remained for Olrik to demonstrate conclusively that alliterating family names were the fashion in the Migration Age; and since *H* is the alliterating letter for the Scyldings the personages referred to certainly are not members of the race. Using Olrik's method we feel sure that Snorre erred in mentioning Hugleik as a member of the Ynglings, the alliterating letter of that family being a vowel. *Knut Stjerna's* observation in his *Essays on Beowulf* to the effect that the Scylding names alliterate with the three most important epic place names of Zealand, Hleiðrar, Heorot, and Hringstaðr is also pertinent. Still further, as I pointed out in my recent book *Hjemligt Hedenskab*, chap. 2, two of the three Heathen priests in Danish runic inscriptions (Hrolf and Hroald), and all the beasts (horses, hounds, hawks, and cocks (haner)) sacrificed at the great ritual feasts in Hleiðrar likewise follow suit. Yet other epically important naming customs might be added; but that would lead us too far here.

The chapter on The *Royal Residence at Leire* contains an examination of the scene of the *Biarkamal*. Olrik rejects identification of the present Söborg with Saxo's *urbs in Lethrica palude* (p. 770), as the topography does not agree.

Neither does he assent to Henry Petersen's view that the Leire of the tradition had borrowed its splendor from Zealand's ancient parliamentary center of Ringsted. Tradition correctly points to the present village of Leire, near Roskilde, as the famed royal seat.

According to the current tradition *Hleiðrarstol*, the 'royal seat of Leire' remained there for centuries. And the German historian *Thietmar* who wrote in the years 1012-1018 mentions the great sacrifices which were celebrated there every ninth year. Olrik maintains, however, that the above testimony is confuted both by archaeological and topographical evidence. In the first place, it is not improbable that epic tradition has fixed as permanent the scene where one important event had taken place. And as to Thietmar's 'historic evidence' it is less trustworthy than appears at first blush. He is hardly correct in letting the sacrificial feasts at Leire continue down to his own times, seeing that Christianity was then victorious in Denmark. For that matter, textual criticism has made it clear that his first draught of the year 1012 did not contain the name of Leire, but that it was added in a parenthesis only on the occasion of a revision, about 1016.

Archæologists are agreed that in the neighborhood of the village of Leire are found a kitchen midden and graves from the Stone and Bronze Ages, but none to compare with them from the Iron Age. This does not, to be sure, exclude the possibility of a settlement there in Scylding times, in view of the fact that this period is characterized by inconspicuous barrows; but the decisive factor is that there are no burial mounds dating from Viking Times which can at all compare with the imposing graves near the royal manor of Jelling in Jutland.

Again, Olrik criticizes the theory which, with a remarkable display of logic, maintains that the Gothic word *hlaiþrs* (answering to Old Norse *Hleiðrar*) points to a tentlike tabernacle. According to him *Hleiðrar* means simply 'huts,' indicating a humble settlement to begin with. Even in historic times Leire continued to be a small country town, as is particularly stated by Sven Aggisson in the 12th century. It never became even a district or county seat or even the center of a parish. Precisely only under the Scyldings, Hroar and Hrolf did it play an important part which ended abruptly with the fall of the Scyldings.

There is no doubt that Olrik is right in all essentials. Nevertheless, he may be inclined to curtail too much the fame of Leire. The testimony of the grave-mounds shows that it was a place of some importance from the very Stone Age and Bronze Age. And even if the change of burial customs later on does not permit us to follow Leire's fates down to the times of the Scyldings, yet it is perhaps a not unimportant circumstance that local tradition has preserved unusually many names of barrows with a distinct epic flavor, such as Danshøj, Kongsstolen, Dronningestolen, and at a little distance, Olshøj which, according to Saxo was named after one king Olaf in the Viking Age.

There is also a better connection than Gothic *hlaiþrs* for the name of the royal seat. According to Edvard Lehmann the word exists today in Modern Danish as '*lejrer*' which means the braces of a hay-wagon; cf. German *leiter*-

*wagen* 'rack-wagon.' Which makes it evident that Leire did not mean 'huts' but, rather, distinctly points to the 'lejrer,' the holy wagon which bore the image of the godhead. And we can form a conception of how it looked from the ancient wagon of Dejberg in Jutland. Thus Leire, according to the testimony of its name, was a sacred spot and consequently can hardly owe its fame to the Scylding king Hroar. In the same direction points the alliteration of Hleiðrar with the epic place names Heorot and Hringstaðr, with the sacrificial animals at the great festival, with the names of the priests Hroald and Hrolf, and with the names of the entire Scylding race. All this reveals Leire as an age-old seat of public worship. We can well conceive that the steep and prominent hill Danshøj directly south of the village was dedicated to the eponymous hero of the Danes as was, in all probability, the famous stone *Danerygh* near Viborg on which homage was done to the newly elected king.

In the chapter on *Scyld* Olrik investigates the legends about the progenitor of the Scyldings. According to Scandinavian tradition he is a warrior king without any particular individuality. But according to *Béowulf* Scyld Scefing (i.e., Scaef's son) is the warlike founder of a royal race who arrives in a warship sent by unknown powers and returns to them again. At the same time there appears also the motif of having him arrive as a poor foundling instead of as the highborn royal hero. The latter motif is found in the chronicler Aethelweard's parallel story of Scaef, and entirely supplants the former one in William of Malmesbury's version. Whereas later investigators have been inclined to favor the founding motif it must be emphasized that the very oldest traditions are at one in laying stress on his warlike attributes. Scaef in Scani, or Skandza, seems to have been the common progenitor of peoples dwelling along the shores of the Baltic. Originally he was perhaps a fertility god, seeing that according to an English harvest rite a sheaf of grain (*scaef*) was let float down the Thames on a shield (*scyld*). Possibly the connection between *scaef* and *scyld* in this connection may have united the two progenitors in the peoples' minds.

Another investigation is devoted to the *Journey of the Dead*. Olrik arrives at the conclusion that it is not native to the North in this form. In Scandinavia the dead were believed to travel the way to Hel on horseback and if a ship was used on the journey, it was merely on a particularly valuable piece of personal property given along. Grave stones arranged in the form of a ship, which are so frequent of occurrence in Sweden, have a decorative origin. In Denmark no ships have been found in barrows; and the arrangement of stones in the form of a ship, which does occur several times, evidently was not a native custom.

Instances in legends of a journey of the dead, as, e.g., the piece about Sinfiotli in the *Edda*, are to be explained as literary loans. The great repository for conceptions of this nature is to be sought in the Celtic lands in which also the story in *Béowulf* about Scyld's last journey originated. Possibly, the Celtic legend came to the North shortly after the beginning of our era. Olrik's conclusions seem entirely trustworthy. Only, one misses a reference to the well-known Langobardian legend of Lamisio, "the man from the fish-pond" (Langobardian *lama*) where we have a similar connection between the two motifs of the predestined savior of the realm and that of the helpless foundling. As the

comparison has been frequently made in German articles it would have been interesting to know what Olrik thought about it.

Here we must also discuss Olrik's chapter on the woman who bore the eponymous name of *Skuld* (corresponding to *Scyld*), chap. II, 5 and V, 2. He rejects connection with the namesake who in the *Edda* appears, now as a valkyria, now as a norn; giving as his reason the circumstance that, according to the Leire Chronicle *Skuld* was the possessor of the Zealand parish of *Skuldelev*, for according to Steenstrup villages with the suffix *-lev* owe their names always to human personages, never to supernatural beings. However, I am not convinced that Steenstrup has proved his point. More important I consider the circumstance that *Skuld*, as a *Scylding* princess, violates the *ancient custom of never naming any one after the eponymous hero of the race*. Cf. my scrutiny of the examples adduced from Schönfeld's "Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen" (*Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi* 1916). This affords a much simpler explanation of *Skuld*'s nature as the evil genius of the *Scyldings* than Olrik's rather involved one.

Chapter IX deals with *Frothi the Peaceful and His Gold Mill*, with reference to the *Biarkamal's* mention of "Frothi's kinsman who sowed his gold rings on the Fyre Plains." The legends have mingled a number of motifs. In the first place, a distinction must be made between a peaceful Frothi, the ruler in a Golden Age, and a warlike Frothi who enforces peace by conquering half the world. We are told how the Golden Age was terminated by the murder of the king, or how the Wishing Mill which grinds out gold comes into his possession and is lost again. The mythical conception of a Golden Age is very old. In Saxo it is ended by a witch in the form of a 'sea-cow' piercing Frothi the Peaceful. This 'sea-cow' corresponds to Frothi's murderer, the sea-king Mýsing of Snorre, i.e., the mouse-grey sea-bull. (It might be added in this connection that on the sea-coast near Stockholm there is a bay called Mýsingfjård which in all probability has something to do with this legend.) The story about the mill tells how it is turned by the giant maidens Fenia and Menia, and how it first grinds out gold and happiness for king Frothi, but then misfortune and death. Variants of this legend are wide-spread, as also its conclusion, that the mill finally grinds out salt on the bottom of the sea. The salt-grinding giant women Grotti Finnie and Lucky Minnie are known to this day on the shores of the Pentland Firth. Olrik perceives in the Northern version of the legend a poetic conception of the rebelliousness of the elemental powers of nature which may be harnessed by man but not overworked with impunity. Seeing that the Norsemen of the earliest times knew nothing of water-mills it is concluded that the idea was most likely derived from the British Islands where, as observed, the legend is strongly localized to this day.

In reading this discussion one wonders why Olrik is silent concerning king Frothi's origin. *Müllenhoff's* identification of him with the god Frey, the other initiator of the Frothi Peace, was of course known to Olrik who, indeed, assented to this proposition. So why did he neglect to specify this?—Now, if Frothi = Frey, then it follows that the cessation of the Frothi Peace is not only a poetical fancy concerning 'the end of the Golden Age' but also a very real



thing, viz., the end of the sacred peace preceding the performance of the sacrificial act. This sacred peace is most reliably explained in Tacitus' description of the worship of Nerthus which is the prototype of the Frey worship (*Germania*, chap. 40). Still further it is easy to understand how Frothi's death by a sea-cow could be conceived as a ritual 'sacrifice of the god.' Certain remarks in vol. II make it plain that Olrik was by no means hostile to interpretations such as this one culled from *Sir Frazer's* "Golden Bough." But evidently he was not yet ready to go into the matter; so it came that no less than 30 years elapsed before Sir Frazer's theory was presented in detail to the Danish public (in my article "Gudedraebning" in *Samlaren* 1915, and my book *Hjemligt Hedenskab*, 1919).

The chapter dealing with *Othin in the Biarkamal* is the only one of the preliminary discussions which has a direct bearing on the poem. I will mention only a few of the best authenticated mythical traits: man can behold the god only by peering through the aperture formed by another person's arms set akimbo—a well-known item in popular belief. It is of help also to sign one's eyes with 'runes of victory,' Othin's special runic signs. Still further, Othin is referred to as riding on the 'high horse,' Sleipnir, and as the spouse of Frigg. The animadversion is in place that Olrik fails to point out that this is the only instance where Othin is mentioned in Danish tradition as a god, and absolutely the only time that Frigg is mentioned at all.

In the chapter entitled *The Danes about the Year 500* Olrik shows in a striking manner how the Danes until the very end of Ancient Times were wholly unknown to history and then all at once, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, blazed forth in a burst of warlike splendor so that their fame resounded throughout Europe. The explosive suddenness of this event can be explained only by some epoch-making political event, such as the foundation of the Scylding empire.

In the chapter on *The Older Line of the Scyldings* the traditional genealogy of the Danish rulers is analyzed and the last members of the tree arranged in two parallel branches:

Scyld	Dan
(Peace-Frothi)	Frothi the Peaceful
Halfdan	Frithleif
Helgi and Hroar	Frothi
Hrolf	Ingiald
Hroerik	

The line starting with Scyld is the older, authenticated as it is in *Beowulf* and the *Quernsong*. The other line is of later origin and was finally joined to the first, thus obviating the awkwardness of having two rival Danish lines.—We miss here a reference to the well-known fact that two historic personages in the second line, Frothi and Ingiald, are not Danes at all but Heathobards who have crept into Danish history on account of the important part they played in the struggle with the Scyldings. Even if generally known to scholars, some reference to the fact would have helped to make matters clearer to others.

The real introduction to his representation of the growth of heroic poetry is furnished by Olrik in the chapters on *Danish Kings in Anglo-Saxon Poems*

and *The Scylding Feud* which discuss the most important Danish references contained in the English poems. Thus, the foundation of the Scylding dominion, Hrothgar's building of the hall Heorot, the Heathobard king Frotha's fall in his struggle with the Scyldings, his son Ingeld's marriage with a Scylding princess, the renewed wars, Ingeld's decisive defeat in Heorot, and finally—as hinted—the ruinous internecine struggle among the Scyldings themselves.

Olrik generalizes as follows on the position of the Danes in song (p. 23): "English tradition thus shows a remarkably detailed picture of the Danish realm and its royal race, as well as of the events that took place in the heroic period, i.e., in the period of the Migration of Nations. The Danes appear as the chief branch of the race to which the poet belongs. No other people occupied a like place in the heroic traditions of the Anglo-Saxons." True words, these! To be sure, *N. F. S. Grundtvig* had said words to the same effect a century ago; but it became the fashion both with Danish and German scholars to fix an abyss between Scandinavians and the imaginary 'Ingvæones' alias 'Anglo-Frisians,' who never formed any clearly defined political or cultural unit. It is fortunate that a breach is now made in these preconceived notions by men like *Chadwick* and *Olrik*.

A section on the historic contents of the *Biarkamal* introduces the detailed discussion of the poem which forms the core of the volume in hand. But we shall here begin with the restoration of the song itself. With all possible circumspection and indefatigable perseverance Olrik turns over and over again Saxo's Latin version of it, until he succeeds in sifting out the few scattered fragments of the original text from the monk's cloud of words and in giving them both coherence, color, and form. He who has not himself tried his hand at this work will with difficulty be able to place a sufficient value on it, and still less dare to criticize. All one can say is that the lay thus restored sounds surprisingly genuine and gets one far closer to the original than does any previous attempt. In re-translating Olrik's Danish version into English it was inevitable that some of the effect would be lost as, in the nature of things, the English vocabulary is still farther from the Icelandic original than is the Danish.

In his restoration Olrik always bases on Saxo's text chiefly, of course, for the main divisions of the original lay. For a comparison and corrective serve the few stanzas of the *Biarkamal* left us in the Icelandic, and likewise the prose rendering in the *Hrolfssaga*. Still other holds are furnished him by occasionally evident alliterations and a few current Icelandic proverbs and epic tags. The Latin text is printed on one page, the critical apparatus opposite, so that the reader can without difficulty form his own opinion. Without wishing in any way to criticize Dr. Hollander's translation, I wish to express my regret that he has not seen fit to render 'Hildar leik' in st. 1 by 'Hild's play'—as is done in st. 16—but by 'Gondul's game of war'; why is not clear.

The *historical contents* of the original *Biarkamal* are enumerated by Olrik himself as follows:

1. The Scylding king Hrolf slays the cowardly and avaricious king Hrœrik and distributes his gold among his followers.
2. One of Hrolf's heroes overcomes Agnar, king Ingiald's son, after a desperate struggle.

3. Hrolf makes an expedition to Sweden, in all probability against king Athisl, and in the course of it strews gold on the plain of Fyrisvellir.

4. Hrolf is attacked in Leire during the night by his thane Hiarvarth who is supported by an army from Svealand and Gautland; after making brave resistance, Hrolf and his men fall. During the battle the castle is burned to the ground.

To be sure this is but a meager collection of facts; but its weight is enhanced by the circumstance that all persons here mentioned by name, excepting only Agnar, occur in *Béowulf*. The latter monument also confirms the inference that Hroerik and Hiarvarth belong to the same race as Hrolf, whereas Ingiald counts among the arch-enemies of the Scyldings, the Heathobards. By and large it is not at all Hrolf's deeds which the poem glorifies—he only stands in the background as the lofty transfigured ideal of a king: by omitting Hroerik from the list of the Scyldings the blot is removed which had stained Hrolf's splendor. The main object of the poem is to magnify the life and death of the ideal housecarl—his rejoicing in Hrolf's generosity, in warlike deeds and battle, and his self-sacrificing fidelity until he falls at the feet of his slain lord. All this is described in a swiftly advancing dialogue between Hialti who wakes Hrolf's champions from sleep and Biarki who responds drowsily at first but then rouses himself to deeds of valor. The lay closes with a powerfully impressive scene—the Scylding princess Hrut finds her dying husband Biarki among the slain and points out to him how Othin is riding over the battlefield which is now deserted by all but the dead and the dying. The author here brings out a characteristic contrast between the woman who bows down submissively before the majesty of the god and the fierce warrior who, even when wounded unto death, challenges the prince of the gods.

In the poetic style of the *Biarkamal* Olrik detects characteristics which point to the Anglo-Saxon epic rather than to the *Edda*.

Although the *Biarkamal* in Olrik's opinion is not equal to the *Lay of Ingiald* in dramatic concentration it became exceedingly famous throughout the North. Thus it was chanted by the skald Thormoth to cheer the warriors of king Olaf the Saint in the morning before the battle Stiklastad; and according to Snorre, the king on this occasion called it *Húsarlahvot* ('exhortation of the housecarls'). In modern Norwegian peasant dialects 'Biarkemal' designates forceful and frank speech.

The ensuing chapters are devoted to an onomastic and epic explanation of the kinsmen, warriors, berserkers, and foes of king Hrolf who form the background of the poem. As this is of lesser interest to non-Scandinavian readers I wish to refer here only to the examination of the supposed identity of Béowulf and Biarki. As is well-known, Béowulf battles in Hrothgar's and Hrothulf's hall with the ogre Grendel; and later in life he dies in a struggle with a dragon. This led *Müllenhoff*, *ten Brink*, and others to identify him with Biarki who in Hrolf's hall fights a winged monster. This parallel is rejected by Olrik, for according to him the Icelandic legend in which this is told belongs to a fairy-tale genre of much later date.

The chapter on *The Home of Hrolf Cycle* is best characterized by Olrik's own résumé: "These are the different influences which give the legends about

Hrólfr their form before they were finally written down in Iceland: a main stock of Scylding legends which cross over from Denmark to England and the Western Isles; and a Biarki story, originating, probably, a little later in the same country, which received its final form in Norway and then met the Scylding legends in the Western Isles.

Corroboration for the theory that the place of origin of the Norn Scylding cycle is to be sought in Western lands is offered in the *Quern Song*, which was composed by some Norwegian-born poet (scarcely later than 950), but also shows traces of Western civilization (the mills), and is associated in all later times with the Western Isles, not with Norway.

The Western colonies of the Scandinavians served evidently, not only as a gate for the importation of new impulses, but also as an intermediary in bringing the Scandinavian peoples into closer contact with one another and thus perfecting their native culture. The older cycle of the Scyldings is the most glorious fruit of this common labor; and the Icelanders gauged this intellectual effort at its true value in calling Hrólf "the most excellent of all the kings of antiquity."

Denmark alone did not share in this later and more splendid flowering of the Scylding legends. There, the simpler but intense hero legends persisted, as the one of Hrólf and his fortitude when sitting still during his fiery ordeal. There, we find a characteristic narrative style, with a vivid feeling for everyday life which the later Norn<sup>1</sup> or rather Pan-Scandinavian, cycle about Hrólf was not able to obscure, a national character all its own which Danish poetry carries over into the Middle Ages."

As to the latter part of the volume it must be said that Olrik's critical analysis of the later growth of the tradition, especially of the Norwegian-Icelandic development, leads one into a veritable labyrinth of motifs which is often bewildering. In the reproduction of the *Biarkamal* one can comfortably follow him, because of the critical apparatus was easily shown. But in the later jungle of Norn legends one is apt to lose one's bearings, and one is inclined to question whether it is really possible to arrange so neatly, and fix the chronology so exactly, as is done by Olrik. One may say that in many cases a more encyclopedic arrangement, such as is attempted above, and a more detailed explanation of elementary presuppositions—especially for non-Scandinavian readers—would have improved matters.

It is most regrettable that Olrik's career was cut short before he had the opportunity to train a greater staff of investigators to exploit the rich treasure of new impulses which he has given us. Let us hope at least that his monumental work *Danmarks Heltedigtning* will not remain a torso like N. M. Petersen's *Gammelnordiske Geografi*. Very likely, the fact that the first volume has now been rendered accessible to the English-reading public will serve as a spur to complete the redaction of the remaining third volume.

In his introduction the translator has written a good sketch of Olrik's activity and influence. The volume closes with a list of Scandinavian sources used and an index which is lacking in the original. As the translation was made

<sup>1</sup> "Norn" is in the translation used for designating the Western Norwegian branch, in Iceland, the Faroes, the Orkneys, etc.

in collaboration with the author, and a considerable amount of new material added, it is of value also for owners of the original. The reproduction of Scandinavian names, both in the original form and in their English equivalents, is above reproach—a praise which cannot be bestowed on all which has been written in Anglo-Saxon countries in this line. Thus, South Jutish place-names are given their Danish, or Danish-English, and not—as is done usually—German forms; e.g., *Slesvic*, not *Schleswig*. I note a misprint in the footnote, p. 252, where for 'Vodder in North Zealand' read 'North Slesvic.' In conclusion I wish to say that the volume redounds to the honor of the American-Scandinavian Foundation, and hope that it will be able to proceed with its splendid work in this direction.

GUDMUND SCHÜTTE

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